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ABSTRACT

This teaching guide is designed to prepare prospective teachers to assume the communication tasks demanded by today's interactive educational environments. This guide is designed to be both theoretical and pragmatic, attempting to provide prospective teachers with the underlying rationale for the use of certain communication strategies and the practical, experiential use of those strategies. The course method and content are directed toward the special communication needs of the prospective teacher of any discipline. Students have an opportunity to develop an understanding of communication concepts applicable to the classroom as well as communication skills useful to them as persons working in other aspects of the educational environment. Course content is developed through readings, lectures, discussions, structured experiences, and student presentations. (RB)

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COMMUNICATION IN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS:

A BASIC COURSE

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CS 501206

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COMMUNICATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Course Outline

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Communication in the Educational Environment is a 5 credit course designed to meet at least five hours per week on a quarterly basis or three hours per week in a semester program. The course method and content are directed toward the special communication needs of the prospective teacher of any discipline. Students will have an opportunity to develop an understanding of communication concepts applicable to the classroom as well as communication skills useful to them as persons working in other aspects of educational environments. Course content will be developed through readings, lectures, discussions, structured experiences, and student presentations. The course attempts to provide the prospective teacher both an experiential as well as a cognitive understanding of the role of communication in the educational environment.

COURSE GOALS

A. To develop in prospective teachers an awareness of the pervasiveness and complexity of human communication in educational environments.

B. To develop in prospective teachers an understanding of the distinctive characteristics of instructional communication.

C. To develop in prospective teachers a recognition of the importance of effective communication in teaching and learning.

D. To develop in prospective teachers a greater awareness of their communicative impact on students and others.

E. To develop in prospective teachers an awareness of and an ability to elicit the unique and substantive contributions students can make to the learning process.

F. To develop in prospective teachers a variety of communication competencies directly applicable to classroom instruction.

prospective teachers with the underlying rationale for the use of certain communication strategies and the practical, experiential utilization of those strategies. It is an effort to apply to the instructional environment research findings of the Speech Communication discipline which are appropriate. We believe that such a course would serve teacher candidates of all disciplines--not just speech communication--and our attempt is to provide a practical document for use in implementing such a course.

COMMUNICATION IN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS: A BASIC COURSE

To begin with, we look at the school or educational environment as a giant, multifacted communication event composed of a variety of communication encounters. Teacher-student, teacher-parent, teacher-counselor, teacher-administrator communication exchanges occur continuously and simultaneously. These exchanges take place in the halls, in the lunchroom, in the administrative offices, and in the classroom. Not only are the communication contexts varied, but the purposes are numerous. Teachers must explain programs and concepts, give directions, establish relationships, elicit student responses, resolve conflict, and, in general, facilitate an open, stimulating exchange of ideas between all members of an educational community.

Preparing prospective teachers to assume the communication tasks demanded by today's interactive educational environments requires a systematic analysis of what those tasks are and development of the necessary competencies. Recognizing the value of active learner involvement, the role of the teacher is rapidly changing from dispenser of information to manager of the teaching-learning process. This new role requires of the teacher communication competencies far beyond the traditional concerns of voice, articulation and information organization. Many of the communication problems experienced by today's teachers are a result of weaknesses in skills in listening and providing feedback to students, failure to modify communication to fit the uniqueness of others, reluctance to express feelings, insufficient skills to involve students actively in the exchange of knowledge and experience, inability to analyze their own communication behavior, insensitivity to nonverbal cues, and a lack of understanding of the nature and significance of the human communication process.

This course will attempt to provide possibilities for examining those areas. It is designed to be both theoretical and pragmatic, attempting to provide

G. To develop in prospective teachers competency in communicating their knowledge of subject matter more effectively.

OVERVIEW OF THE UNITS

Unit I. Instructional Communication

Unit II. Interpersonal Communication in Educational Environments.

Unit III. Small Group Communication in the Classroom

Unit IV. Information Dispensing in the Classroom

Unit V. Instructional Discussion in the Classroom

Unit I. Instructional Communication

POINT OF VIEW

Although similarities exist between communication in business, in government, in families etc., and that which takes place in educational environments, we are defining instructional communication as a particular kind of communication with special purposes and distinguishing characteristics. It consists of all communication which directly affects the instructional process. Such communication may take place in the halls, the offices, the lunchroom, or the classroom, and influences, in some way, the instructional interchange between teachers and learners. In other words, prospective teachers must be able to communicate with all members of an educational community in ways which enhance and contribute to effective communication in the classroom setting.

To assist in the examination of instructional communication, we have identified four ways in which we believe instructional communication can be distinguished from other communication. First of all, the context itself, which deliberately focuses on improving the competencies of the student population within its walls, affects the communication exchanges in particular ways. Secondly, unlike other contexts, the communicators involved in instructional communication represent limited roles: teachers, students, administrators, counselors, building staff and parents. Thirdly, the educational environment, given its purposes and

activities, subjects the communicators to continual evaluation which directly affects the kinds and quality of communication. And fourthly, there is within the educational environment a constant and persistent overload of information. While these four characteristics are still in a formative stage in our minds, we are convinced that instructional communication should be examined in view of its distinctiveness so that prospective teachers can identify and acquire communication behaviors which fulfill the communication requirements of the educational environment.

To facilitate the examination of the distinctiveness of instructional communication, we are suggesting models which seem to us useful in that endeavor. Such models are helpful in conceptualizing the teaching-learning process and aid in focusing on the communication aspects of that process.

And, finally, we have attempted to overview the communication competencies required of prospective teachers to orient students to the units that follow.

GOALS

A. To develop in prospective teachers an awareness of the distinctive characteristics and unique requirements of instructional communication.

B. To enable prospective teachers to conceptualize the teaching-learning process in terms of communication variables.

C. To increase the prospective teacher's understanding of the interdependence of teaching and learning and communication.

D. To increase the prospective teacher's awareness of the complexity and contextual nature of human communication.

E. To encourage in prospective teachers a recognition of and desire to develop specific instructional communication competencies.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

As a result of this unit, prospective teachers will be able to:

1. identify and describe the distinctive characteristics of instructional communication.

2. identify and analyze communication variables in the teaching-learning process.

3. construct a communication model that conceptualizes the functions of communication in teaching and learning.

4. analyze communication events in terms of the specific contexts in which they occur.

5. identify specific instructional communication competencies.

POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

A. Characteristics of Instructional Communication

1. The Context

The contexts in which instructional communication takes place are quite similar in many respects but differ greatly from contexts in which other communication occurs. Most educational environments resemble each other and consist of physical spaces such as classrooms, laboratories, halls, lunchrooms, student centers, similar furniture, lighting, equipment, etc. In addition to similar physical contexts, educational environments are deliberately focused towards one goal: the improvement of student competencies. These contextual variables create in the communicators expectations for certain communication behaviors.

2. The Communicators

Instructional communication, communication which affects the instructional interchange between teachers and learners, is engaged in by all members of the educational environment; those members, however, are limited in terms of numbers and roles to teachers, students, administrators, counselors, building staff, and parents. Occasionally, guest speakers come from outside a given educational community, but, for the most part, the communication occurs between a fixed number of persons with assigned roles who engage in both interpersonal and information dispensing and information acquisition behaviors.

Each of these communicators affects the instructional communication within an educational environment. What the counselor reports to the teacher concerning the testing of the sophomore class, for instance, affects the teachers expectations and communication with his/her students; the interpersonal exchange which takes place in the Student Center between a teacher and students affects the communication in the classroom later that day. While the communication behaviors are numerous and diverse in educational environments, the communicators are limited to persons within the environment. Those persons are perceived or defined as possessing greater or lesser competency in subject matter and ability to communicate primarily by the roles which they assume. Prospective teachers must become aware of the communicators within an educational environment, the roles they play, and the influence they exert on instructional communication.

3. The Evaluative Climate

The distinctiveness of instructional communication results also from the effects of the constant evaluation processes which are a part of all educational environments. The constant attention to the developmental process produces verbal and nonverbal communication predominantly oriented toward evaluation. There is a day by day, hour by hour, measuring process in which all communicators work under a conscious perception of evaluation. Unlike business or other similar environments, where the emphasis is on the end product, the educational environment is interested also in evaluating very thoroughly the processes involved in the acquisition of knowledge. Much of the teacher's communication is evaluative in form, but even more importantly, the teacher or administrator is viewed as an evaluator in most communication exchanges.

4. Communication Overload

Instructional communication takes place in an environment that provides constant and persistent overload, making it necessary for the communicators to consistently record what is going on between them. The quantity of speech communication that exists in an educational environment is overwhelming without taking into consideration the processing and evaluation of that communication. Prospective teachers must carefully evaluate the impact of their communication on a system that is already overloaded.

B. Conceptualizing Instructional Communication

Models provide a conceptualization of instructional communication and, hence, a means of identifying, describing, and classifying the communication variables involved. For this purpose some of the more useful models include:

1. The Becker Conceptualization

Since the overall goal of everyone's efforts in educational environments is to provide students with meaningful learning experiences, it is particularly important to provide a model of communication which has its primary focus on message received rather than message sent. For this reason, we have adapted the Becker conceptualization of communication to this end.[1] Becker points out that each of us constructs our received message from pieces of information existing within our own "communication environments" or "mosaics."

> "Each individual must grasp from this mosaic those bits which serve his needs, must group them into message sets which are relevant for him at any given time, and within each message set must organize the bits and close the gaps between them in order to arrive at a coherent picture of the world to which he can respond. Individuals vary widely in their pictures of the world for there is a great deal of variation in their needs and backgrounds and the order in which they are exposed to the bits, the media which facilitate exposure to each bit, and the gaps between the bits."[2]

Hence, a student's received message may contain only a partial amount of the message sent by the teacher. Prospective teachers must realize this in order to focus their efforts on message received rather than message sent.

2. The Basic Teaching Model

The Basic Teaching Model divides the teaching-learning process into four component parts: instructional objectives, entering behavior, instructional procedures and performance assessment. It provides a framework for identifying and examining systematically the major communication requirements in the teaching-learning process.

3. The Rhetorical Model

The Rhetorical Model of the teaching-learning process proposes that teachers must reach their own educational goals by helping students achieve their own goals. The chief functions of the teacher in this model are to inform, motivate, influence and persuade students. The model focuses on the communication strategies involved in each function.

C. The Human Communication Process

Human communication is a dynamic process involving the interaction and interdependence of a number of variables. Communication involves much more than a person sending a message that is received by another person. To more fully understand the nature of human communication, it must be examined in its total context. Some of the more important concepts of contextual communication include:

1. The Contextual Nature of Communication

Communication takes place in a multi-dimensional context. The elements in the context exert considerable influence on the communication transaction. The processing and interpreting of what a person says or does is affected by surrounding contextual variables such as time, temperature, location, furniture, dress, architecture, lighting, etc.

2. Communication Contexts are Both Verbal and Nonverbal

When people communicate, the message and the relationship are refined both verbally and nonverbally. Verbal communication can be used to impart information, evoke emotion, reduce uncertainty and unify people. Nonverbal communication can be used to express emotion, enhance the impact and clarity of verbal messages and to define and affect relationships.

3. Contextual Variables are Interdependent

When two people communicate, they are simultaneously affected by their own as well as by the other's verbal and nonverbal behavior. Both are also affected by environmental factors operating in the particular communication context.

4. Contextual Variables are Continually Changing

While individuals strive for some degree of stability, our lives and the environment in which we live are continually changing. Successful communication requires individuals to recognize and accept the changing nature of people and the contexts in which we communicate.

5. Communication is Ongoing in any Context

You cannot not communicate is perhaps an apt description of the dynamics of human communication. In any context, we continually send and receive verbal and/or nonverbal cues; our act of sending, particularly, is often subconscious.

D. Overview of Competencies Required for Instructional Communication

Prospective teachers need to identify the competencies demanded by the educational community which they plan to enter. Such competencies as the ability to communicate information, elicit student response, lead and facilitate discussions, listen responsively and analyze interaction should be overviewed at this point so that students are prepared for the units which follow.

POSSIBLE ASSIGNMENTS

The prospective teacher will demonstrate an understanding of instructional communication and the communication required in educational environments. For example:

Create for the class an example of a communication event typical of the educational environment. Each small group will roleplay the incident and analyze it in terms of competencies required and application of possible models for the rest of the class. The course instructor should provide each group with performance criteria to guide the preparation and promote a substantive presentation.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Since we view instructional communication in this particular way, there are few resource materials available at present although we are aware of a number of forthcoming publications. Reading the following materials, while not directly applicable, should stimulate further thinking about the characteristics and uniqueness of instructional communication, possible models which assist in its conceptualization, and identification of the communication competencies required of prospective teachers.

DeCecco, John P. The Psychology of Learning and Instruction: Educational Psychology. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968. (Chapter 1.)

Gorman, Alfred H. Teachers and Learners: The Interactive Process of Education. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1974. (Chapters 1 and 2.)

Phillips, Gerald; David Butt and Nancy Metzger. Communication in Education: A Rhetoric of Schooling. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974. (Forward and Chapter 4.)

Schmuck, Richard and Patricia Schmuck. Group Processes in the Classroom. Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Company, 1975. (Chapters 1 and 7.)

Stanford, Gene and Albert E. Roark. Human Interaction in Education. Boston: Allyn and Cabon, Inc., 1974. (Chapters 1 and 2.)

Unit II. Interpersonal Communication In Educational Environments[3]

POINT OF VIEW

Interpersonal communication can be defined as that quality of communication which emerges when "the persons communicating are willing both to be aware of others as humans instead of objects and to reveal or share something of their own humanness."[4] The underlying philosophy of interpersonal communication in the classroom is the recognition of each individual as a unique human being and the development of mutual reciprocal bonds between teachers and students. This philosophy suggests that teachers must not only be aware of and sensitive to the uniqueness of each student but must also be willing to share something of themselves in establishing relationships with others.

Interpersonal communication is not confined to classroom transactions. Much of the communication that takes place in the educational environment is characterized by short, fragmented and unplanned interpersonal exchanges that occur in the halls, the office, the lunchroom, etc. Such communication establishes and develops relationships between members of the educational community. The prospective teacher, therefore, needs to develop interpersonal competencies for use in a variety of communication situations. The purpose of this unit is to explore the basic principles of interpersonal communication and to provide prospective teachers opportunities to develop competencies in communicating interpersonally.

GOALS OF THE UNIT

A. To increase the prospective teacher's ability to recognize and understand the variables that affect communication processing in the classroom.

B. To develop in prospective teachers an understanding of the critical behaviors and attitudes necessary to establish interpersonal relationships in the classroom.

C. To increase the prospective teacher's awareness of the subjectivity of perception and its implications for human communication.

D. To develop and/or improve in prosective teachers skills in listening.

E. To develop in prospective teachers a sensitivity to nonverbal communication both as a sender and receiver.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

As a result of this unit, prospective teachers will be able to:

1. identify variables that affect the way students process communication in the classroom.

2. describe the importance of self-concept to learning and the role of the teacher and interpersonal communication in the development of positive self-concept.

3. identify student and teacher behaviors and attitudes necessary to establish interpersonal relationships in the classroom.

4. define the concept of negotiation of selves and describe how it operates in the classroom in establishing interpersonal relationships.

5. operationalize interpersonal communication concepts in the classroom by describing how he/she would integrate these concepts into his/her own behavior.

6. increase the probability of communicating more productively by demonstrating an awareness of and skills in perception.

7. demonstrate improved skills in listening and an awareness of the other's communication by confirming, understanding and diminishing defensiveness.

8. identify and analyze the functions of nonverbal cues in interpersonal communication.

9. interpret nonverbal cues in an instructional setting and modify the instructional procedure accordingly.

POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

A. Communication Processing in the Classroom

In the classroom students process any particular communication event in highly personal ways. The message sent is not always the message received. Teachers need to be aware of some of the variables that influence student processing of communication. Among the more important variables are:

1. Self-Concept

However difficult it may be for each person to define, we all have a concept of ourselves as a person. Self-concept includes all beliefs, attitudes, and feelings we have regarding our identity. The development of self-concept is a continual process in which we learn about ourselves through interaction with others. Our self-concept influences the way in which we communicate; the messages we send and the messages we receive are determined in part by the way we see ourselves. In the classroom, students must be provided opportunities to interact extensively and interpersonally in ways in which they will learn more about themselves.

2. Perception

In the classroom, teachers and students alike are continually perceiving verbal and nonverbal communication cues, often from many different sources. It is important that teachers recognize that these cues are raw data which do not contain messages and that meaning is assigned by each person's interpretation of the data. Further complicating this phenomenon is the fact that much of the raw data in instructional contexts is evaluative in nature. When teachers recognize the unique ways in which individuals select, organize and interpret raw data and the factors which affect this process (attitudes, beliefs, emotions, needs, interests, etc.) they are better able to promote interpersonal communication in the classroom.

3. Acceptance of Self

The degree to which an individual has achieved acceptance of self is important to communication in the classroom. The student who is secure in him/her self is more open to communicate his/her needs, feelings, attitudes, knowledge and experience. The higher the degree of self acceptance in the classroom, the more open the communication and, consequently, learning is more productive.

4. Personal Needs

Personal needs have a significant influence on communication in the classroom. Prospective teachers must recognize that students may fail to see or hear communication cues that do

not meet their needs. For example, the student who has a strong need to be liked or accepted may ignore cues that do not fulfill this need.

B. Establishing Relationships Through Interpersonal Communication

Establishing positive relationships through interpersonal communication in the classroom depends on both the teacher's and the students' willingness to share some of their own personal humanness and to be aware of the humanness of others. This process, called negotiation of selves, occurs when those communicating construct and respond to definitions of themselves and to definitions of the other persons communicating with them. Establishing positive relationships requires that the teacher, as model, be open and honest in communicating. Important concepts related to establishing positive relationships in the classroom that the prospective teacher should be aware of include:

1. Empathy: Being Aware of Others

Empathy means to view another person from his/her own frame of reference, to understand and be able to feel with him/her. Empathy on the part of the teacher is a necessary prerequisite to establishing positive and helping relationships with students.

2. Positive Regard

Positive regard, respect or caring refers to an individual's concern for and about another person because he/she is a person. Positive regard is the recognition of the importance and value of being human. In the classroom, this caring is not altered, positively or negatively, by what a person says or does. It requires that the teacher respect the person for what he/she is, not for how well they fit into some preconceived set of conditions or expectations.

3. Congruence

Congruence means communicating what you genuinely mean and feel. It does not mean that communication is one way or self-serving, but it does imply that communication should be open and honest. Relationships are built on the exchange of ideas, feelings and attitudes--those of the students and the teacher's. Students should be appraised of the teacher's "state of mind," and the teacher should encourage congruence in the students' communication.

4. Trust

Trust is an important variable in establishing teacher-student relationships and a classroom climate conducive to maximizing learning. The higher the degree of trust students have in the teacher and the classroom situation, the more they are willing to risk. Consequently, the amount of sharing of ideas, experiences, feelings, etc. is increased, making the learning experience more productive.

5. Sharing

Sharing is communicating in ways that help others understand and see the other clearly. It implies a willingness to communicate relevant feelings and thoughts. Sharing of ourselves in the classroom should be constructive, designed to promote positive relationships. Teachers need to be aware that personal sharing in the classroom should be appropriate to the context and the relationship.

6. Openness

Openness in the classroom means that teachers are willing to "hear" messages that may not be consistent with their own value system, knowledge, or experience. Openness allows more messages (information, opinions, etc.) on a greater variety of subjects (sex, drugs, etc.) to enter into classroom interactions. Openness reduces risk and defensiveness and improves the quality of communication through increased information and the willingness of students and teachers to communicate openly and honestly.

7. Interpreting

The teacher is continually bombarded with verbal and nonverbal cues and must make some effort to interpret this raw data into something meaningful. Teachers must be aware that the way we interpret raw cues is contextually bound and reflects our personal biases. Interpretations in the classroom should avoid harsh, judgmental responses, and the inferences teachers make should be tentative rather than permanent.

8. Evaluating

Evaluating is a behavior common to teachers. In classroom instruction, the teacher may discover him/her self evaluating students in unintended ways such as interrupting, correcting, disagreeing (often nonverbally) and even by the failure to provide feedback. The potential danger of unnecessarily evaluating students is the tendency to draw conclusions about the student (bright, slow, etc.) which severely inhibit interpersonal communication in the classroom.

9. Listening

Our ability to listen is affected from moment to moment by our perceptions, feelings, thoughts, attitudes, associations, etc. Effective listening begins with a conscious effort to improve listening skills. Important listening skills for the prospective teacher to master include:

a. listening to confirm: the teacher can use verbal and nonverbal confirming behaviors which say to the student "I'm listening to you."

b. listening to understand: listening to understand involves perception checking. When perception checking, the teacher verbalizes (paraphrases, para supports) his/her interpretation of what was said and asks the student who was speaking to verify or confirm the interpretation.

c. listening to minimize defensiveness: since much of the communication in the classroom is evaluative in nature, the teacher must avoid making students defensive. Ways of minimizing defensiveness include being positive, delaying evaluations, limiting negative evaluations, keeping evaluations tentative and actively soliciting clarification of what you hear.

10. Nonverbal Communication

Human encounters in the classroom are not only characterized by verbal exchanges but also by nonverbal communication. Individuals communicate with their entire bodies and in many critical situations, nonverbal cues are to be more trusted than words. In the educational environment, as in other contexts, classroom meanings are generated by touch, vocal nuance, glance, gestures and facial expressions. Prospective teachers need to be aware of how nonverbal communication can enhance or inhibit interpersonal communication. Variables of particular importance include space, environmental elements, facial expressions, para-language, postural cues, gesticulation and touch.

POSSIBLE ASSIGNMENT

The prospective teacher will demonstrate to the class, in small groups, the major effect of a concept studied in this unit and its application to teaching and learning. The group task is to plan and execute the demonstration in such a way that the rest of the class can experience the concept and gain understanding regarding the impact of the concept on teaching and learning.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Stewart, John and Gary D'Angelo. Together: Communicating Interpersonally. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1975. (This book provides an excellent study of quality interpersonal communication.)

Thompson, James J. Beyond Words: Nonverbal Communication in the Classroom. New York: Citation Press, 1973. (As the title implies, this book examines nonverbal communication in the classrooms.)

Unit III. Small Group Communication in the Classroom

POINT OF VIEW

Since the ability to communicate effectively in small groups is now a requirement for living in our complex society and because small groups offer a valuable teaching method providing simultaneous verbalization by several class members over the issues being studied, we believe that all prospective teachers should be able to set up and facilitate small instructional groups. The term instructional groups can be defined as groups of approximately 3-10 members in which group processes are purposefully organized and structured to stimulate learning and a responsive sharing of the members and the material under consideration. These processes are varied and produce diverse results. Prospective teachers must develop an understanding of the value of small instructional groups, the types appropriate for the classroom, and a means of organizing and planning their use.

GOALS OF THE UNIT

A. To create in prospective teachers a willingness to integrate small instructional groups into their teaching methodology.

B. To enable prospective teachers to recognize the advantages of small instructional groups.

C. To develop in prospective teachers an awareness of the types and uses of small instructional groups.

D. To enable prospective teachers to appropriately plan for and organize small instructional groups.

E. To develop in prospective teachers an understanding of the stages of development in small instructional groups.

F. To enable the prospective teacher to gain skills in facilitating resolution of conflicts within small instructional groups.

OBJECTIVES

As a result of this unit, prospective teachers will be able to:

1. identify the advantages of small instructional groups.

2. differentiate among the various types of small instructional groups.

3. select tasks appropriate for small instructional groups.

4. organize different types of instructional groups to accomplish a variety of tasks.

5. identify and describe the various stages of development in small instructional groups.

6. assist small instructional groups in solving internal problems which impede group progress.

POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

A. The Value of Small Instructional Groups in the Classroom

1. Advantages over Lecture, Recitation, Quiz, and Independent Study

The study of the effectiveness of small group methods as compared with other forms of instruction for teaching information and concepts have yielded no significant differences. In terms of retention of materials up to six months later, however, group discussion methods show a distinct advantage, most likely because of increased verbalization of ideas.

2. Additional Advantages

a. Small group methods are particularly helpful in enhancing motivation and in fostering positive attitudes towards subject matter.

b. Small groups enable students to subject their ideas to many different viewpoints for comparison and for evaluation.

c. Small groups develop problem solving and decision making skills.

d. Small groups promote behavior changes as a result of commitment to small group decisions.

e. Small groups train members for effective participation in societal groups.

B. Types of Small Instructional Groups Appropriate for the Classroom

Since we believe that the use of small instructional groups has been badly abused due to a misunderstanding of the role of small groups in the classroom, we have focused our attention primarily on the use of carefully structured, usually task-oriented small groups which can be designed to facilitate active learner involvement in any discipline.

1. Case Studies

   a. Harvard Case Study

      Groups are given printed cases which describe an actual situation for analysis, open discussion, and final decision which is usually in the form of a recommended action. Case analyses should be made in advance of the discussion since most tend to be lengthy and complicated.

   b. Incident-Process Case Discussion

      Groups are given a brief printed description of an incident which has required adjudication. The group must obtain additional information and then come to consensus on a decision with supporting reasons for its choice. The groups are then given the real decision and evaluate the adequacy or inadequacy of their information gathering and decision-making.

   c. Brief Case Studies

      Groups are exposed to a real life situation through print or media and asked to analyze the situation. Cases are normally examples of human relations or leadership problems.

2. Topic on Exploratory Discussion

   Groups interact over an assigned topic, issue or problem with the intent of pooling their combined experiences, research, understandings, etc. to stimulate interest, expose members to a diversity of viewpoints, and develop their understanding of the issues under concern.

3. Problem Solving

   Groups are given real or hypothetical problems which must culminate in a final group project which may take the form of a paper, a public discussion presentation, or the implementation of a solution to a problem which has been derived from the members of the group.

4. Role Playing

   Groups are presented with a situation and asked to assume roles and act out the incident. The role playing may be interrupted at any time for analysis of the behaviors by the group or by the rest of the class. Observations are made by the audience and compared to the expressed thoughts and feelings of the role players.

5. Discussion Stimulants

   a. Brain Storming

      Groups are asked to interact over an idea on an unrestricted basis without the application of evaluation or criticism.

The goal is to produce the greatest quantity of ideas regardless of the quality. Brain storming promotes the emergence of ideas which can then be considered in depth.

b. Buzz Sessions

Groups are asked to respond quickly to ideas or concepts presented in lecture or some other form. This allows for participation from many members and quick feedback on the issue under consideration. Ideas generated in buzz sessions can then be examined more carefully in succeeding discussions.

C. Planning and Organizing of Small Instructional Groups

1. Designing the Task

Designing small instructional group work which will enable students to communicate effectively and productively toward a given goal is a complicated process. Explanation of group tasks should always be clearly stated, specify particular outcomes, and utilize group abilities. As in the use of any instructional method, students need to understand the rationale behind the activity and be given the means by which they may assess their accomplishments. Setting up sequential discussion patterns can assist in this process. For example, the Dewey reflective thinking steps can be utilized as a series of steps for shaping group inquiry. Or the teacher may specify the steps the group must work through to solve a problem or come to a decision.

2. Understanding the Stages of Development in Small Instructional Groups

Small groups grow and develop through several different stages. While there are many ways of categorizing and analyzing these stages, we are offering one way of looking at the life cycles of small groups.[5]

a. Beginning Stage

Concerned with questions regarding belonging, compatibility, competence, acceptable behavior.

b. Norm Development Stage

Concerned with "How far can I go?" and "How is this going to work?" Some shared leadership and responsibility.

c. Conflict Stage

Concerned with disagreements over content and procedure. "Get-the-leader" time.

d. Transition Stage

Concerned with the acceptance of difference of opinion, sharing of leadership, and establishment of new norms.

e. Production Stage

Characterized by a "we" feeling, development of cohesiveness. Interaction is goal-directed and productive. Decrease in power relationships.

f. Affection Stage

Characterized by increased appreciation of the group, close personal interaction, "good feeling" stage.

g. Actualization Stage

Characterized by an openness to the expression of conflict, the acceptance of consensus, decision-making--a stage which is rarely achieved.

C. Accepting Conflict

1. Conflict is inevitable; the conflict phase in group development may have a discernable beginning and end, but group conflict does not.

2. According to Maslow,[6] there are four basic types of conflict.

a. Sheer choice conflict occurs when no information is available as when the rat makes choices in a maze.

b. Multiple means conflict occurs when the alternatives are equally attractive.

c. Multiple goals conflict occurs when two goals are mutually exclusive.

d. Catastrophic conflict occurs when there are no choice alternatives; the situation is one of pure threat.

3. Conflict occurs over the following:

a. Task or impersonal matters such as time, unequal energy levels, physical problems, tasks, lack of a clear understanding of the problem, information, method of operation, and criteria for evaluation.

b. Socio-emotional or personal matters such as a sense of belonging, involvement, control, affection, roles, rewards, personalty differences, external loyalties.

4. Resolving Conflict

Healthy groups learn to resolve conflict, not to avoid it. Groups must learn to clarify the source of conflict, tolerate trivial conflicts, bargain, arbitrate, and finally disband the group if necessary.

POSSIBLE ASSIGNMENT

The prospective teacher will demonstrate an understanding of uses of small instructional groups by devising a question or task and specifying the series of steps required to develop an answer or complete the task for each of the following types of groups: case study, topic discussion, problem-solving discussion, and role playing. Each plan will include the problem, specifics for setting up the group, and some means of evaluating the group performance.

POSSIBLE READINGS

Applbaum, Ronald, et al. The Process of Group Communication. Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1974. (Chapters 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10 & 11.)

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Olmstead, Joseph. Small Group Instruction: Theory and Practice. Alexandria: HumRo, 1974. (This book is useful as a teacher's handbook directed toward planning and using small groups of various kinds.)

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Unit IV. Information Dispensing in the Classroom[7]

POINT OF VIEW

The lecture method of dispensing information in the classroom is perhaps the most maligned instructional strategy in contemporary education. Critics point out that the lecture method provides little feedback to the student, that students are not actively involved with the subject matter, that the lecture does not provide the student with direct experience and that, at best, the lecture is suited only to lower levels of learning. Many educators have called for a moratorium on lecturing.

Our contention is that the lecture is neither good nor bad in itself; it must be evaluated within the context of what the instructor wishes to achieve. We believe the lecture is well suited to a number of instructional purposes. It is a reasonably efficient, time-conserving method of dispensing information not readily available; it allows the instructor to synthesize complex material, and can provide a framework for organizing learning.

Information dispensing in the classroom is not limited to the lecture. Even in the most student centered, open classroom formats, there exists the requirement of giving directions, specifying procedures, providing demonstrations, making assignments and reviewing. Our observation has been that such communication events are inevitable and, moreover, useful in the classroom; our purpose is to enable prospective teachers to employ such communication strategies more effectively.

GOALS OF THE UNIT

A. To develop in prospective teachers a recognition of the functions of a variety of information dispensing strategies commonly used in classroom instruction.

B. To enable prospective teachers to organize instructional content and to communicate that content clearly and effectively.

C. To provide prospective teachers with opportunities to develop skills and competencies in utilizing information dispensing strategies.

D. To enable prospective teachers to gain insight into their own strengths and weaknesses as communicators in essentially teacher dominated, one-to-many instructional situations.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

As a result of this unit, the prospective teacher will be able to:

1. identify a variety of information dispensing strategies and describe the requirements of each.

2. analyze student audiences in an instructional setting and prepare an information dispensing strategy to meet the unique requirements of those groups of students.

3. prepare a lecture that demonstrates competency in applying the principles of organization, clarity and support.

4. present a lecture using a variety of verbal and non-verbal behaviors designed to enhance student interest, motivation and understanding.

POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

A. The Lecture

1. Analyze the Student Audience

As in every speaker-audience communication event, it is the audience that determines that effectiveness of the speaker and the message. In the classroom, it is the quality of learning achieved by the students that determines the effectiveness of the lecturer and the lecture. Specific variables the teacher should consider in analyzing the student audience include:

a. Length of Lecture vs. Age of Student

Gauge the amount of time of the lecture so that it is appropriate to the age (attention span) of the learner. The younger the group of students, the shorter the attention span. A lecture of 30 minutes is generally considered the maximum amount of time regardless of age level.

b. Student Knowledge

Assessing student knowledge should determine what students already know about the subject and provide the teacher with information about where to begin the lecture, what information to cover and in what detail.

c. Prerequisite Cognitive Capabilities

The thoroughness or complexity of the material to be covered should be determined by the students' capability for achieving the objective of the lecture.

d. Interest Level of Students

Interest or commitment students have toward the subject may greatly influence the selection of materials, message strategies, and style of the lecturer.

e. Rejection Factors Operating in Students

Students may possess information and/or attitudes that might create resistance to the objective of the lesson or to specific information in the lecture. The teacher needs to anticipate these obstacles and make appropriate modifications.

2. Analyze the Subject

The most important aspect of analyzing the material you wish to cover is to determine the specific objective(s) you want your students to achieve. Can the achievement of the objective(s) be facilitated by direct information dispensing by the teacher? Other aspects of analyzing the subject which should be considered include:

a. Nature of the Subject

Not all material is readily adaptable to the oral medium. Highly technical material or the need for meticulous specificity may require the teacher to supplement the oral message with additional stimuli.

b. Breadth and Depth of Material to be Covered

The teacher must decide if there are certain aspects of the material that must be covered above all else and if there are certain aspects that can be precluded for the moment.

c. Information Dispensing Strategies

Only when the material is relatively simple and can be covered in a short amount of time can the teacher rely exclusively on the oral medium. The teacher needs to discover ways that will maximize the effectiveness of the

message. Particularly important is the selection of the strategies that clarify and amplify material and engage the students' interest such as audio-visual aids, printed handouts, chalkboard illustrations, etc.

3. Analyze the Communication Environment

When the teacher decides that the lecture is the most efficient way to present material relevant to a given objective, he/she must then consider the communication environment in which the lecture will be presented. Two important elements of the classroom environment include:

a. Physical Setting

Important to the effectiveness of the lecture is the physical setting of the classroom. Students should be comfortable and seating arranged in such a way as to maximize their ability to see and hear the teacher; note taking should be possible, and potential distractions eliminated.

b. Psychological Climate

The psychological climate includes the attitudes and moods of the students, the relationship among students and between teacher and students. The teacher needs to reduce psychological barriers which restrict learning and make every effort to establish common ground between the students and the subject matter.

B. Organizing the Lecture

1. The Introduction

The introduction of a lecture should attempt to gain the attention of the students, create interest in the material, preview the central ideas of the lecture and/or identify what is expected of the learner. The introduction to the lecture itself should be stimulating to the students. The teacher in preparing the introduction needs to give particular attention to:

a. Establishing a Motivating Set Appropriate to the Lecture

Students are more highly motivated when they can relate the relevance of the material to their own personal experience. The teacher, in the introduction, should establish a cognitive and/or affective link between the objective of the lecture and the students' view of what is important to them.

b. Strategies for Introducing a Lecture

Ways of achieving student attention, interest, and motivation are many and varied. One of the most effective ways of initia-

ting a lecture is with the statement of a problem, one which is meaningful to students and presented in such a way that the student feels a need for solving the problem. Other standard techniques include the use of rhetorical questions, stories, anecdotes, examples, illustrations, previewing major points and identifying expected learner behaviors.

c. Identifying Student Responsibilities

Students need to be appraised of what their responsibilities are during and after the lecture. These responsibilities may range from reminders to listen carefully, take notes, and ask questions to describing what students will be expected to know or do as a result of the lecture.

2. The Body

The body of the lecture must be carefully prepared with particular attention to identifying the central idea of the lecture, partitioning and organizing the main and subordinate points of the speech, and selecting and integrating supporting materials. The body of the lecture should enhance in every way the students' achievement of the instructional objective. In constructing the body of the lecture, the teacher should consider carefully each of the following:

a. Relationship of the Central Idea to the Instructional Objective

To facilitate student achievement of the instructional objective, the teacher must determine the one central idea he/she would like the students to remember or respond to when they've forgotten the details of the lecture. The central idea of the lecture is prescribed by what the students are expected to know or do as a result of the lecture. Too often, lectures contain superfulous and even confusing bits of information. All of the information, material and strategies employed by the teacher should relate the central idea of the lecture to the instructional objective.

b. Main and Subordinate Points and Supporting Material

The teacher must identify and properly phrase main and subordinate points which reinforce the central idea and add clarity and force to the lecture. A variety of materials which clarify, vivify, reinforce and relate the information to the students' personal experience must be integrated into the lecture. These supporting materials may include examples, analogies, demonstrations, and audio-visual aids.

c. Understanding and Retention Devices

In addition to providing materials which add support to specific points in the lecture, the teacher must employ devices designed to increase student understanding and retention. The

devices might include the periodic use throughout the lecture of restatement, reiteration, internal summaries, direct and rhetorical questions.

d. Organizational Patterns

The teacher, cognizant of the central idea/instructional objective, must examine the total body of information to be covered and determine the most appropriate organizational pattern. Typical patterns include historical, spacial, cause to effect, topical, problem-solution, inductive and deductive.

3. The Conclusion

The purpose of the conclusion is to bring the lecture to a close. The conclusion provides the teacher with the opportunity to summarize or recapitulate what the student is to know or do and to stimulate the learner to achieve the instructional goal. In the conclusion, the teacher needs to give attention to:

a. Achieving Closure

The importance of achieving closure is often overlooked in information dispensing. It is assumed that if the students were exposed to the main body of information, they are capable of achieving the instructional objective. This, of course, is not always true. In achieving closure, the teacher must relate the material of the lecture to the instructional goal and reinforce student learning.

b. Method of Achieving Closure

In achieving closure, the teacher needs to provide a summary and consolidation of concepts and ideas which were covered. The summary not only reviews the major points and central idea of the lecture but also connects previously learned material, present ideas, and future learning.

C. Elements of Presentation

Teachers need to be aware that their style of presentation can significantly affect the comprehension and persuasiveness of the lecture. The most effective presentation is generally described as varied, flexible, animated and fluent. Since the presentation of a lecture is both verbal and nonverbal, the teacher needs to give some attention to the following:

1. Delivery

The human body and what one does with it can be an affective instrument of communication. In the classroom, the delivery of a lecture should be casual or informal. The teacher should be free to move about the room diminishing the physical space between him/herself and the students. Eye contact should be established with each student and emphasis to the message added through appropriate gesticulation.

2. Vocal and Semantic Qualities

The teacher should employ a conversational style when lecturing. Intonation, rate, and volume are important elements in facilitating student understanding of the message. Attention also needs to be given to the choice of language. The use of vocabulary beyond or below the students' comprehension level will no doubt have negative consequences. Similarly, long and complex sentences may be unintelligible to students. What is said and the way it is said should aim to increase student understanding of the material.

3. Varying the Stimulus Situation

To stimulate student attention and interest throughout the lecture, the teacher needs to develop techniques for varying the stimulus situation. Movement within all areas of the teaching space while using hand, body and facial gestures tends to reinforce student involvement with the material. The teacher may vary the pace of instruction, pausing to allow students to think through new concepts or may alter the kind of participation required of the students by asking questions, directing attention to visuals, etc.

D. Other Information Dispensing Strategies

While many of the techniques and principles identified under lecturing are applicable to other information dispensing strategies, the teacher should be aware of the unique communication requirements of some of the more commonly used strategies. These include:

1. Making Assignments

When making an assignment, the teacher needs to communicate the task clearly, explaining the objective, procedures, relationships to broader goals, basis of evaluation and due date. The teacher must also select the appropriate time in the lesson to make the assignment and utilize student verbal and nonverbal responses to guide necessary clarification of the assignment.

2. Demonstrations

The demonstration should be carefully prepared and clearly organized. Each step or segment of the demonstration should be explained to the students and questions from the class encouraged. Students should be actively involved in the demonstration whenver possible. The classroom setting may need to be altered to encourage student response to the demonstration. The teacher must account for all materials and be reasonably certain that the demonstration will work.

3. Recitations and Reviews

Recitations and reviews are essentially group deliberative processes led by the teacher. Both are based on the assumption that some learning has occured in a particular subject area. The chief func-

tion of the recitation is to refine the learning of specific information or skills. The chief function of the review is to extend basic learnings and associations. In leading recitation and review sessions, the teacher must be skilled in asking questions and analyzing student responses.

POSSIBLE ASSIGNMENT

The prospective teacher will prepare and deliver a 20 minute lecture as a simulated classroom teaching exercise. Prior to the presentation, the prospective teacher will identify the relevant behavioral characteristics of the student audience (interest level and motivation, knowledge of subject and intellectual capabilities, and attitudes) before whom the lecture is to be presented. The lecture is to contain an introduction, body and conclusion and the prospective teacher will demonstrate his/her understanding of the function of these elements by (1) gaining the attention of the students and creating interest in the subject, (2) identifying the central idea of the lecture and specifying what students are to know or do as a result of the lecture, (3) organizing the material in a clear and effective manner using appropriate supporting material, (4) using devices designed to enhance understanding and retention, (5) achieving closure, and (6) supporting the verbal message with appropriate delivery.

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Johnson, James A. and Roger C. Anderson. Secondary Student Teaching: Readings. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1971. (Chapter 6).

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Unit V. Instructional Discussion

POINT OF VIEW

Acknowledging the obvious, that all discussion can be instructional, the term "instructional discussion" is used here to refer to a particular type of discussion; it occurs in the classroom and is a teaching strategy by which students move through material to a predetermined goal (new understanding). The teacher, with the help of students, determines the goal of the discussion based on a careful assessment of what material students already understand and the areas which need to be explored. Sometimes the need is to simply acknowledge and comprehend a concept; other times it may be important to move through various levels of learning to the making of informal judgment, interpretations, applications, evaluations, etc.

In this form of interaction, students are encouraged to advance the group thoughtline collectively by building upon each other's contributions and by utilizing the more experienced learner's (the teacher's) past experience with the material. This kind of discussion presupposes an unequal distribution of knowledge; the teacher has studied the material much longer than the students and has worked through it with previous classes. It also assumes, however, that students will appropriate knowledge for their own use only if a need to know is created and if the students feel the material is useful for their own lives. Since students provide the majority of the input in an instructional discussion, reasons for knowing the information and possibilities for application usually become very apparent to them. In addition, participation in instructional discussion gives students an opportunity to gain recognition and praise which should, according to learning theory, strengthen motivation.

GOALS OF THE UNIT

A. To enable prospective teachers to gain an understanding of the characteristics, functions and requirements of the instructional discussion.

B. To encourage prospective teachers to become more aware of and skilled in creating a classroom climate conducive to instructional discussion.

C. To provide prospective teachers with the opportunity to develop skills in initiating, facilitating and concluding an instructional discussion.

D. To enable prospective teachers to develop expertise in phrasing and using questions and in probing student responses in an instructional discussion.

E. To enable the prospective teacher to critically analyze his/her own communication in the instructional discussion.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

As a result of this unit, prospective teachers will be able to:

1. Identify and discuss the characteristics, functions and requirements of an instructional discussion.

2. Describe the necessary prerequisites to a successful instructional discussion.

3. Design a questioning strategy which includes primary and secondary questions on each level of learning.

4. Identify and utilize facilitative behaviors in an instructional discussion.

5. Utilize an interaction analysis instrument to evaluate and improve verbal communication behaviors.

POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

A. Instructional Discussion

1. Characteristics of Instructional Discussion

Instructional discussion can be classified as developmental, that is, the purpose is to move students towards new understandings and appreciations. The chief characteristics of instructional discussion include:

a. Cognitive and Affective Progression

It is a teaching method by which students move from point A (beginning point -- may have little or no understanding of ideas, concepts, etc.) to point B (new understanding -- usually of firmly established concepts) as a result of the activity.

b. Utilization of Questions

It utilizes differing types of questions to stimulate the development of the group thoughtline which moves forward in a more or less orderly fashion toward a given goal.

c. Focus on Learners

It draws out and integrates students' relevant, personal experience in order to reach the goal by way of a route that is meaningful to students; it is open to a change in goal if reason for such a change becomes apparent.

d. Utilization of Higher Levels of Learning

It requires analysis and integration of given or remembered data and generally requires higher order thinking; it is not a recitation session.

e. Involvement of all Members of the Group

It requires an experienced learner (teacher) and involves the total group; thus the teacher should feel a responsibility to encourage participation.

f. Flexible Organizational Framework

It has a flexible general framework which is constructed in advance by the teacher; the specific route to the goal is determined by student input.

g. Prepared Questioning Strategy

It requires carefully prepared questions and alternatives plus a means of integrating responses; it elicits student questions as well as answers.

2. Planning the Instructional Discussion

Planning an instructional discussion is somewhat different from planning other classroom activities, because the teacher is interested less in what he/she will say and more in how to create and organize an effective questioning strategy which will enable students to reason toward or discover information and insights without being told. Important considerations in planning the instructional discussion include:

a. Selecting an Appropriate Topic and Objective

The topic must be one with which the students have sufficient background so that they may engage openly and productively in a discussion. If the teacher wants the group to operate at the analysis or evaluation level of learning, the group must at least have mastered the knowledge level.

b. Developing a Questioning Strategy

Most classroom questions are typically used solely to determine what students have learned; questions in an instructional discussion are used to advance group thoughtline development and to stimulate discovery learning. Preparation of questions prior to the discussion is a necessity.

c. Adapting Teaching Behavior

In the instructional discussion, care must be taken to avoid setting up the teacher as a switchboard operator (teacher-student-teacher, etc.) or using the teacher as the focal point of the discussion.

3. Encouraging Learner Participation

Obtaining full student participation in an instructional discussion is not an easy task. Some students may be genuinely confused by the discussion format; others may be reticent to take risk positions open to the scrutiny of the total group. Many students, willing to discuss, may have difficulty responding directly to each other without the intervention of teacher acceptance or clarification. To encourage student participation in the instructional discussion, the teacher needs to consider these important pre-discussion variables:

a. Psychological Climate

Prerequisite to a successful discussion is a climate that fosters openness and cooperation. Students must feel that their opinions and ideas are valid, and that they can express themselves freely.

b. Physical Setting

The arrangement of students (seating) should be conducive to the desired interaction. The arrangement of chairs should be in a circle or some other configuration that maximizes student to student communication. The teacher must be removed from a position of authority and integrated into the group as a contributing member.

c. Role of the Discussant

Since discussion methods differ from classroom to classroom, students should be appraised of how the teacher views and employs discussion. To maximize the effectiveness of discussion, students shall have some understanding and competence in the unique requirements of an instructional discussion.

B. Employing the Questioning Strategy

1. Asking Questions

Many differing types of questions are useful in the instructional discussion. Since the more complex mental processes cannot take place until there are facts or information on which to focus, most instructional discussions begin by answering who, what, when and where about a particular topic. When those answers are established, hopefully by student contributions, the discussion can move on from such concrete questions to questions of a higher order. Following is a hierarchical classification of questions which may be helpful in the preparation of a questioning strategy for use in an instructional discussion.

a. Memory Questions

These are at the lowest level of learning and require students to recall factual material.

b. Translation Questions

These require the student to change information into his/her own words or into another form.

c. Interpretation Questions

These require the student to discover and explain relationships between facts, generalizations, definitions, values and skills.

d. Application Questions

These require the student to solve problems through identification of issues and selection of appropriate generalizations and skills.

e. Analysis Questions

These require the student to make a systematic examination of facts in order to solve problems.

f. Synthesis Questions

These require the student to solve a problem that involves original, creative thinking.

g. Evaluation Questions

These require the student to make judgment or assessments of good or bad, right or wrong, according to his/her own standards.

2. Facilitating the Instructional Discussion

In order to utilize the questioning strategy effectively to move the group thoughtline toward the desired goal, the teacher must be able to elicit and encourage student response, interpret feedback, and analyze group progress. While the central role of the teacher is to assist in the development of the group thoughtline, he/she must be careful not to dominate the discussion or to take it beyond the group's interest or acceptance. Some important principles in facilitating an instructional discussion include:

a. Initiating the Discussion

Once a class is established and has been involved in discussions successfully, the teacher will have little difficulty in initiating the discussion. With a new class meeting for the first few times, the teacher will need to assume the initiative. One of the best methods is to provide a specific, vivid, common experience in the presentation of the lesson material. A film, demonstration, teacher reading, etc. shared by all the students provides the advantage of everyone knowing something about the topic. Regardless of the experience or capability of the group, the teacher should always initiate the discussion at the appropriate level of learning.

b. Quality of Questions

After setting the tone (motivating set) of the discussion, the teacher must initiate and guide the discussion with relevant questions. It is not only important that the questioning strategy move the group thoughtline toward more critical thinking; each question asked by the teacher should be provocative and unique, well phrased, clear and substantive.

c. Probing Student Responses

The teacher, or other members of the group may wish to probe a student's initial response to elicit additional information or to clarify the response. Ways of probing student's responses are:

1. Restating: an exact or nearly exact repetition of the student's words.
2. Paraphrasing: repeating the essence of the response (Is this what was said?).

3. Clarifying: requesting or providing an explanation of the response (Is this what was meant?).
4. Elaborating: requesting or providing additional information.
5. Reasoning: requesting the student to justify or explain how he/she arrived at the response.
6. Encouraging: verbal remarks and nonverbal cues which indicate acceptance and the desire for the student to continue.
7. Silence: allowing the student and group to process the response; often results in additional information or clarification.

d. Summarizing

As the discussion progresses, an effective means of insuring the development of the group thoughtline is to provide internal summaries by students or teacher. These summaries serve the dual role of keeping the discussion moving toward the objective and assuring comprehension and acceptance on the part of the students.

e. Mediating Differences

In most good discussions, conflict will occur. The importance of conflict should not be overlooked; conflict can contribute significantly to learning. Whatever the means of conflict resolution is employed by the teacher, it should be student centered. That is, students should have every opportunity to resolve the conflict themselves. If the conflict is one of fact, encourage the students to conduct the appropriate research and report the results to the group; if reasoning is involved, the group may be asked to reassess the process that led to the conflict, etc.

f. Concluding the Discussion

It is highly important in an instructional discussion that a clear summary and synthesis of ideas occur before terminating the discussion. Students should be encouraged to contribute to this process. Where students fail to reach the appropriate conclusions, the teacher must intervene and redirect the group's reasoning toward the desired objective.

3. Analyzing the Communication Behavior of the Teacher

Particularly important in the instructional discussion is the communication behavior of the teacher. The teacher is continually interacting with the group in an effort to facilitate the development of the group thoughtline. In the process of this interaction, the teacher, intentionally or not, exerts a direct influence on the group. It is imperative, therefore, that the teacher understands fully the impact of his/her communication on the group. Several methods of observing and describing teacher-student interaction are available. Perhaps the most

useful to prospective teachers is the Flanders System of Interaction Analysis.[8] This system provides a clear picture of teacher's verbal behavior and indicates whether the group's freedom is being restricted or expanded.[9] The major categories used to describe teacher-student interaction include:

a. Teacher talk: Indirect Influence

   1. Accepts feelings: accepts and clarifies the feeling of the student in a nonthreatening way.

   2. Praises or encourages: praises or encourages student action or behavior, verbally and/or nonverbally.

   3. Accepts or uses ideas of student: clarifying, building, or developing ideas suggested by a student.

   4. Asks questions: asking a question about content or procedure with the intent that a student answer.

b. Teacher talk: Direct Influence

   1. Lecturing: giving facts or opinions about content or procedures; expressing his/her own ideas, aking rhetorical questions.

   2. Giving Directions: directions, commands, or orders with which a student is expected to comply.

   3. Criticizing or justifying authority: statements intended to change student behavior from a nonacceptable pattern; bawling someone out; stating why the teacher is doing what he/she is doing; extreme self-reference.

c. Student Talk

   1. Student talk—response: talk by student in response to teacher. Teacher initiates the contact or solicits student statement.

   2. Student talk—initiation: talk by students which they initiate.

d. Noncodable

   1. Silence: pauses or short periods of silence in which there is no verbal communication.

   2. Confusion: periods in which communication cannot be understood.

POSSIBLE ASSIGNMENT

The prospective teacher will, in a simulated classroom teaching exercise, engage students actively in an instructional discussion. The questioning strategy employed by the prospective teacher will contain questions at each level of learning, and competence in guiding the group thoughtline toward a predetermined goal will be demonstrated through the effective use of questioning, probing student responses and providing appropriate internal summaries and synthesis of ideas.

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Communication in educational environments is a complex process which requires of the teacher knowledge of basic communication principles and theories as well as competency in communicating to achieve various purposes in a variety of contexts. The interactive nature of contemporary classrooms and the visually oriented, active and challenging student of today pose for the teacher unique communication challenges. This course, as outlined above, is designed to prepare prospective teachers to meet this challenge by providing them with opportunities to develop an understanding of how communication functions in educational environments and experience in utilizing communication strategies and skills directly applicable to classroom instruction.

FOOTNOTES

1. Samuel L. Becker, "Rhetorical Studies for the Contemporary World," The Prospect of Rhetoric, eds. Lloyd Bitzer and Edwin Black (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), pp. 21-43, Becker did not intend his conceptualization to be oriented specifically to classroom situations. Adaptation of his model to the classroom reflects our use of his essay.

2. Becker, p. 33.

3. Interpersonal communication cannot be adequately covered in a single course, much less a single unit within a course. Our attempt to include some basic principles of interpersonal communication is to introduce prospective teachers to the importance of the concept of quality communication in teaching and learning; our preference is that prospective teachers take an additional course in interpersonal communication.

4. John Stewart and Gary D'Angelo, Together: Communicating Interpersonally, (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1975), p. 25.

5. Gene Stanford and Albert E. Roark, Teachers and Learners: The Interactive Process of Education, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1974), Chapter 3. (See also Lawrence Rosenfeld, Human Interaction in the Small Group Setting. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1973 for a review of other theories of the phases of group development.)

6. A.H. Maslow, "Conflict, Frustration, and the Theory of Threat," Man and International Relations, edited by J.K. Zawodny, (San Francisco: Chandlers, 1966), pp. 166-169.

7. Since a lecture may be defined as any identifiable segment of information presented orally, methods of preparation, augmentation and presentation may vary widely. It is not the purpose of this unit to suggest that there is only one way to prepare and present a lecture. Prospective teachers, with limited or no formal classroom teaching experience or speech communication training, we believe, should be provided with a prescriptive approach to information dispensing. This unit, therefore, focuses on the basic speech communication variables of audience and subject analysis, organization of materials, and delivery. We encourage course instructors (whose students are at the appropriate level of mastery) to suggest more innovative and novel ways to present information.

8. Edmond Amidon and Ned Flanders, The Role of the Teacher in the Classroom: A Manual for Understanding and Improving Teacher Classroom Behavior, (Minneapolis: Association for Productive Teaching, 1967).

9. While interaction category systems provide important information concerning the interaction of the teacher and members of the class they do not provide for assessment of nonverbal communication which must be analyzed in some other way. Various coding systems are presently under evaluation and hopefully a workable nonverbal assessment instrument will be forthcoming shortly.